

## Chapter 6 School Meals

### Module 3: School Meal Program in Action

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#### Step Up and Step Out with School Meals

Now that there is an awareness of the importance of school meal programs and the opportunities available for making environmental change have been assessed, it's time for your coalition and school food service staff to take action.



### School meal program takes action!

There's a great new recipe that your coalition will want to try! It's called Partner Pie! It's simple, easy, and sure to be a hit in your school!



#### Partner Pie

##### *Ingredients:*

- \* Team Nutrition Initiative (1)
- \* Nutrition Advisory Councils
- \* Cafeteria Theme Days
- \* Coalition Support

##### *Recipe Directions:*

1. Gather information about the Team Nutrition Initiative, and encourage your school to become a Team Nutrition School.
2. Work with your school food service staff, administration, and teachers to create student Nutrition Advisory Councils.
3. Lend coalition support, in the form of time, money, and materials to help school food service staff create cafeteria theme days.
4. Be a cheerleader for the school meal program! Spread news of the good works!!
5. Combine all of the ingredients together in your school, and serve healthy meals, with some nutrition education on the side, and top it off with some FUN!

## Partner Pie: Team Nutrition



“Poor habits are often established during childhood. More than 60% of young people eat too much fat, and less than 20% eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables each day.” (2)

The National School Lunch Program (3), which began in 1946, was created to address the concern of poor food intake. This program is taking a **Step Up and a Step Out** and now has the goal of meeting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Children are offered school meals that are lower in fat and sodium, and have more variety of foods offered. To help with these healthy goals, USDA has created Team Nutrition, an initiative designed to help make implementation of changes easier and more successful.

### Team Nutrition Values (1):

Your coalition and school meal program can work together to share these Team Nutrition values:



1. Children should be empowered to make food choices that reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
2. Good nutrition and physical activity are essential to children's health and educational success.
3. School meals that meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans should appeal to children and taste good.
4. School health programs must build upon the best science, education, communication, and technical resources available.
5. Public/private partnerships are essential to reaching children to promote food choices for a healthful diet.
6. Messages to children should be age appropriate and delivered in a language they speak, through media they use, in ways that are entertaining, and actively involve them in learning.
7. The focus should be on positive messages regarding food choices children can make.
8. It is critical to stimulate and support action and education at the national, state, and local levels to successfully change children's eating behaviors.

## Partner Pie: Nutrition Advisory Council (NAC)



Nutrition Advisory Councils (2) are more commonly called “NAC’s.” They are sponsored by the American School Food Service Association (ASFSa), a national group of school foodservice professionals who are the voice for child nutrition.

NAC groups bring students together to learn about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity and the role the school meal program plays in a healthy lifestyle. The students plan, implement and conduct activities that help the school and community to learn more about good nutrition and how to put it in practice.

NAC is also a forum to get important feedback from the students about what they like or don't like about the school meal program and suggestions for making changes to meet sound nutrition guidelines. A NAC that works hand-in-hand with the local school food service director has an exciting opportunity to make student recommendations become realities.



## What are the Goals of a NAC?



Nutrition Advisory Councils strive to:

1. Learn about and promote school meal programs with emphasis on their importance for good health, active bodies and alert minds.
2. Become an active part of a statewide NAC program.
3. Make the school meal program better to meet the needs of the entire student body.
4. Offer responsible suggestions to improve the school's health initiative.
5. Serve as a communications bridge between school meal programs, school faculty, administration, students and the community.
6. Develop a better understanding of the need for healthy eating and nutrition education in the classroom, cafeteria and community.



## Nutrition Advisory Council activities include:

- ♥ Servings as role models
- ♥ Communicating with administration and food service staff
- ♥ Planning menus based on school meal guidelines
- ♥ Making recommendations for improving school meals
- ♥ Taste Testing
- ♥ Creating Bulletin Boards
- ♥ Writing newsletter Articles
- ♥ Implementing surveys
- ♥ Raising funds for NAC activities

- ♥ Leading community services such as food drives
- ♥ Providing nutrition education for students and the community
- ♥ Decorating the dining room for special days
- ♥ Participating in ASFSA Art Contests
- ♥ Merchandising meals
- ♥ \_\_\_\_\_ (List your own ideas here!)

**Example:**



**Students Plan Grab and Go Menus**

Students at a middle school were unhappy with having to stand in the cafeteria line to wait for hot food. They wanted the option to choose a complete cold food meal that they could just “grab and go”. The food service director worked with a group of students on menu options, and the Nutrition Advisory Council took the ideas back to their homerooms for comments and suggestions. The change was a great success. Not only was there increased school lunch participation, and improved satisfaction among the middle school students, but also the food service staff felt a great reward for a job well done!

**How can you start a Nutrition Advisory Council?**



Call or write the American School Food Service Association (2) for an application. A Nutrition Advisory Council handbook is available.



**Partner Pie: School Meal Theme Days**

Theme days are the third ingredient in creating a Partner Pie, and an important ingredient your coalition will not want to leave out!

**Benefits of Theme Days**

- ♥ Opportunities are created to link the classroom, cafeteria, and community
- ♥ Food service staff have input and develop ownership in their program
- ♥ Classroom learning objectives can be met with an active, hands-on approach
- ♥ The cafeteria becomes the “where the action is,” the place to be
- ♥ Excellent marketing tools for the school meal program
- ♥ Schools report increases in school meal participation and a decrease in food waste

**Examples:**

Following are a few examples of cafeteria theme days.



**Example 1: Happy Birthday Kansas!**

- a. Plan a theme day coordinated with Kansas Day.
- b. Coordinate with classroom teachers to add a Kansas products unit the same week of the theme day. FS staff provides a lesson for this unit.
- c. Invite special guests into the classroom, or cafeteria to discuss the Kansas products they raise or grow.
- d. Include tasting of Kansas products in the classroom, or daily in the cafeteria the week of the Kansas theme day.

**Example 2: Take A Space Walk!**

- a. Coordinate with a unit on space/astronauts, etc. in the classroom.
- b. Coordinate a field trip to a Cosmosphere, or similar outing.
- c. Coordinate with an art teacher to build a space ship for display in the cafeteria.
- d. Food service staff provide a lesson on foods in space versus school lunch.
- e. Coordinate with a PE teacher to plan activities such as a moon walk.

MENU	
Lunar Chicken	Crater Taters with Milky Way Sauce
Meteorite Greens	Moon Whip
Mars Buffet	Rocket Fuel

**Example 3: Summer Is Only A Memory!**

- a. Decorate the cafeteria with kiddy pool, rubber ducky, etc.
- b. Encourage kids, teachers, and food service staff to dress in Hawaiian shirts, sunglasses, etc.
- c. Coordinate with the music teacher for Beach Boys music in the cafeteria.
- d. Have essay contests in the classroom with the topic...“My Favorite Day Last Summer”...display all the essays in the cafeteria.
- e. Coordinate with the PE teacher to have dancing the week of theme day doing some of the oldies, i.e., the swim, the jerk, and the pony.

MENU	
Bum Sandwich	Surfboard Relishes
Fruit Beach Balls	Suntan Cookies
Surfin' Goodies	Summer Suds



#### Example 4: A Trip to Italy!

- Decorate the cafeteria with artwork maps of Italy and play Italian music during lunch. If possible, have parents volunteer to come in and act as waiters.
- Discuss Italian culture, agriculture, or other topics in the classroom.
- Dance to Italian music in P.E.
- Note:** Use the idea to study any country!

#### MENU

Veggie Antipasto	Italian Pasta Feast
Italian Bread	Moo Refresher
Red, White, and Green Fruits...Strawberries, Banana, and Kiwi	

#### Example 5: A Day at the Circus!

Use your imagination....A "bear walk" in PE class...or discussion about balancing energy and eating choices "on the trapeze"...or multiply the "rings and acts" for a lesson in math!

#### MENU

Flying Trapeze Sandwich	Lion Biscuits
Clown Around Vegetables	Elephant Fruit
Dancing Bear Cookies	Universal Beverage

### Partner Pie: The Secret Ingredient



The secret ingredient for Partner Pie is of course, **coalition support**. Without it, the pie just won't have the same flavor!

It seems to be a fact of life that we hear more about the things that are wrong than we hear about what is good. The school meal program has many challenges. As anyone knows, especially when it comes to food, you can't please all the people all of the time. Partnering creates a win/win situation with recognition and support going all directions!

**Examples** of how food service and the coalition can TEAM together to serve Partner Pie at your school:

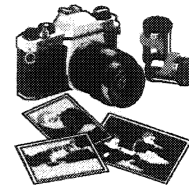


**Example 1: “Let the Good Times Roll”(3)**

“Let the Good Times Roll” was a weeklong Team Nutrition campaign, developed by the food service staff. The initiative teamed five nutrition learning concepts: variety, fats, proportion, balance, and choices with fun filled facts and activities from American history 1940’s through the 1980’s. Menu names were created to fit each decade, such as 1970’s Disco Dessert. A 70’s lesson in the classroom, presented by food service staff, was created around the concept of fats, and discussed the beginning of the fast food restaurants, the American diet today, and student ideas for adding healthy choices to their favorite restaurants menus. The week was highlighted with an all community sock hop, hosted by the coalition.

**Example 2: Make a Video or Take Pictures!**

One school took pictures of their Mexican Food Day. Food service staff dressed in costume; classrooms made giant chili peppers to decorate the cafeteria; music was played; “new” healthy foods were served; and classrooms talked about culture in Mexico. The pictures were shared at a school board meeting along with discussion about how well students accepted the new menu items, and how it linked with classroom learning. It was a fun way to build support from the school board!



**Example 3: Where’s the Beef?**

A school was using a precooked hamburger patty, containing TVP (texturized vegetable protein). Even though hamburgers are generally a student favorite, school lunch participation decreased when it was on the menu.

- ♥ The food service director held some chat sessions with students, and discovered how much they disliked the texture, odor, and flavor of the hamburger product. The director went to the local feedlot, and worked with the manager to purchase 100% fresh ground beef. She was even able to negotiate a price break for the school district!
- ♥ The coalition assisted in writing an article for the community and school newspapers highlighting the support and collaboration of the local feedlot with the needs and wants of the students.
- ♥ The food service staff and coalition also made signs and banners promoting the change, declaring, “Where’s the Beef...It’s at School!!!!” Needless to say, student participation on hamburger day picked up significantly.
- ♥ What about the calorie and fat content of that menu? The director was able to alter the other menu items being offered on that day to still meet requirements. Once again, this effort was able to support the concept that

all foods can fit, and that food service can not only meet the school lunch requirements, but the needs and wants of their patrons.

**Example 4: I'm Hungry!!**

Students sometimes go home and complain to their parents that they "don't get enough to eat at lunch". This may cause families to have misconceptions about the school meal program.

- ♥ Food service staff can use this as an opportunity to educate families about the school meal program. Presentations at PTO meetings, open house displays, and newspaper articles are good ways to reach families. An explanation of the school meal requirements, serving sizes, offer versus serve, and policies specific to the school meals/food intake can be reviewed.
- ♥ The student who is "hungry" may actually be an athlete who needs to consume more calories at breakfast, and in the evening to meet energy requirements. On the other hand, a teenage girl may only pick at her lunch because she is "counting calories" and the days till she needs to fit into that prom dress and then is hungry at night! These examples set up a great opportunity to teach parents what the recommended daily nutritional allowances are for their child. Other education opportunities include suggestions for at home snacks, quick meals on the run, and breakfast tips that can help families join food service staff in a common goal to meet the daily nutritional needs of their child.
- ♥ Coalitions can volunteer manpower and time to help with article writing, presentations to groups, and can even develop educational materials for families.

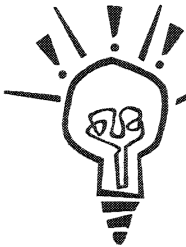


## References and Resources

- (1) For information about the promotion of healthy school meals, contact:  
USDA/Food and Consumer Service  
TEAM Nutrition  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 802  
Alexandria, VA 22302  
(703) 305-1609  
Website Address: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>
- (2) Physical Activity and Good Nutrition: Essential Elements for Good Health, AT-A-GLANCE 2000, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For information and copies of the document, contact Centers for Disease Control and



- Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Mail Stop K-46, 4770 Buford Highway NE, Atlanta, GA 30341-3717, Telephone (770)488-5820; Fax( 770)488-5473. Websites: [ccdinfo@ced.gov](mailto:ccdinfo@ced.gov); <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp>.
- (3) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/>
  - (4) **American School Food Service Association (ASFSA)**  
Attn: Nutrition Advisory Council  
1600 Duke St., 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Alexandria, VA 22314-3436  
1-800-877-8822  
[www.asfsa.org](http://www.asfsa.org)
  - (5) "Celebrate the Century," a US POSTAL SERVICES EDUCATION SERIES. For more information call 1-800-450-4636.



**Module Tip:**

The recipe for success begins with the food service staff stepping up and out beyond meeting nutritional requirements, and partnering with students to create a win-win situation for everyone.

**FAQs:**

- ❑ **Question:** Our students complain all the time about the food. It makes it difficult to be a school food service worker.
- ❑ **Answer:** Is your food service taking an active role in meeting student needs? Do you have a NAC formed to obtain student input? Try theme days, cafeteria bulletin boards, music, and costumes, and go beyond a focus on nutritional requirements.
- ❑ **Question:** It takes time just to organize special days. Is it really necessary to take the time to fill out a planning form, too?  
**Answer:** It's true it will take a little more time, but is likely to save time in the future. People come and go, and good ideas are forgotten if not written down. Imagine, just going to a file and pulling out all of the information you need to initiate an activity! Don't forget to jot "things you might do differently next time under "Comments" so that you can start out under the best circumstances!

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**Module Glossary:**

**Team Nutrition:** A USDA initiative designed to help schools making healthy changes in the school meal plan do so easier and with more success.

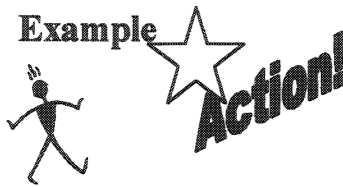
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## Environmental Change Plan

**Objective:** School Meal Objective: Increase school lunch participation for Grades 1-5 to 90% by January 2006.

Environmental change methods planned. Check all that apply.	Actions and resources needed to implement the plan	Problems to resolve	Who takes action, and by what date?	Review— results of actions Check all that apply.
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input type="checkbox"/> Repetition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Support <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reward  -or- Problems resolved: <input type="checkbox"/> Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Time <input type="checkbox"/> Location <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<b>Action:</b> <i>Cafeteria/Classroom/PE Theme Day-- Dinosaur Cruise</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b> <i>To be determined</i>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>To be determined</i>		<i>Kari, Connie, and Debra will organize the day Kari will coordinate cafeteria activities by November 2, 2005</i>	<b>Communication:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Great marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Need M-and-M's  <b>Time:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good timing <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work  <b>Location:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work  <b>Resources:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible cost <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work  <b>Participation:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Needs work  <b>Overall:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Great-continue <input type="checkbox"/> Good-revise <input type="checkbox"/> Fair-revise
	<b>Action:</b> <i>PE activities</i>  <b>Marketing Plan:</b>  <b>Resources:</b> <i>Music, games and stretches</i>		<i>Debra will coordinate with PE teachers by November 2, 2005</i>	
<b>Comments:</b>				



## Event Planning Tool

**Title Of Program/Project/Event:**      **Dinosaur Craze**

☐ Media ☒ School ☐ Business ☐ Community

**Target Audience:** (check all planned for your activity)

☒ Students 580 ☐ Parents 55 ☒ Teachers 30 ☐ School meal director and staff \_\_\_\_

☒ School administrators \_\_\_\_ ☐ Business/community leaders/community-at-large \_\_\_\_

**Outline/Description/Objectives/Ideas:**

1. Coordinate with teachers so that a dinosaur unit is studied in the classroom the week of the theme day. Have this unit include the study of what dinosaurs ate, versus our nutritional needs.
2. Encourage students, teachers, and food service staff to wear dinosaur shirts on the theme day.
3. Coordinate with the music teacher to have music available during lunch.
4. Coordinate with the art teacher to let students make their own plaster dinosaur footprints.
5. Food service staff decorate the cafeteria, bulletin boards, etc. with the theme.
6. Coordinate with the PE teacher to add games, movement, stretches that week that fit the dinosaur theme.

**Marketing plan:** Announcements over the PA system; letters inviting parents

**Resource Materials/Supplies/Food/Handouts:**

Library books, art supplies, music

**Costs/Funding Source:**

Variable depending on activities selected

**Manpower Needed:**

Food service staff for lunch

Classroom/PE teacher

**Space/Time/Date Requirements:**

Cafeteria/classroom space

**Prep Time:**

Varies

**Alternate Plan:**

Use as a theme for open house, or parent visitation, and activities and snacks that revolve around the dinosaur theme.

**Comments:**

Dinosaurs seem to be a "hit" with a wide range of people, from boys to girls, from elementary age through adults, and much information exists for integration into the classroom.

Menu – Dinosaur Nuggets/Stegosaurus Fries/Jurassic Veggie Mix/Tyrannosaurus Rex Whip/ Herbivore Greens/Pterodactyl Juices